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MARCH/APRIL 2018
THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

THE HEALTHY CONTENT ORGANIZATION

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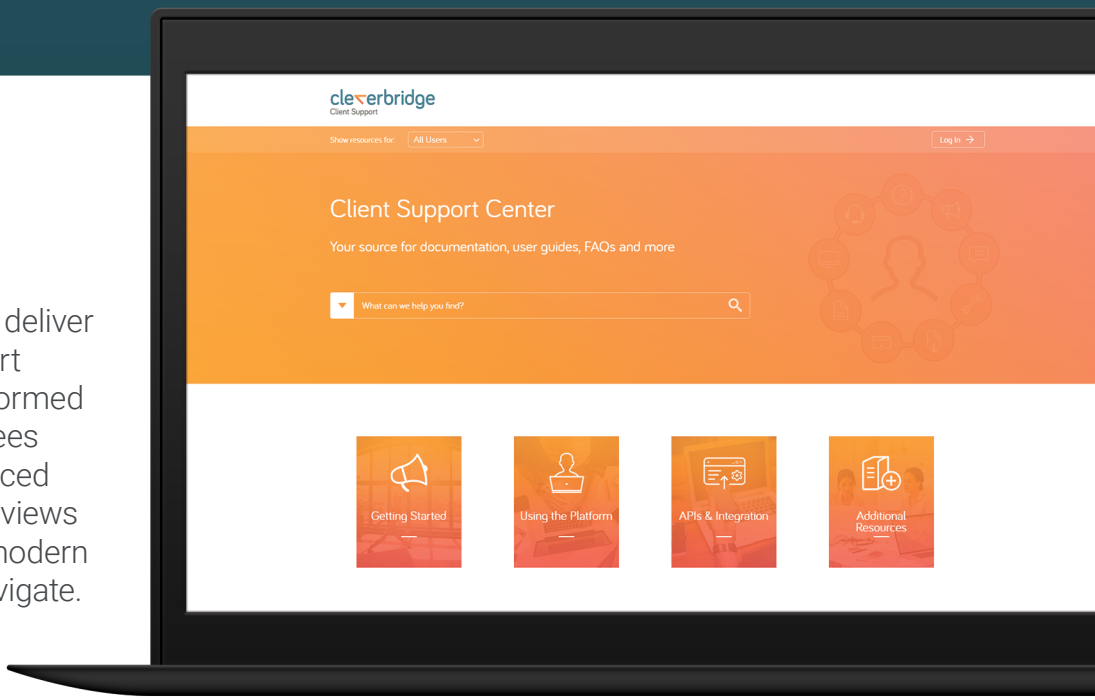

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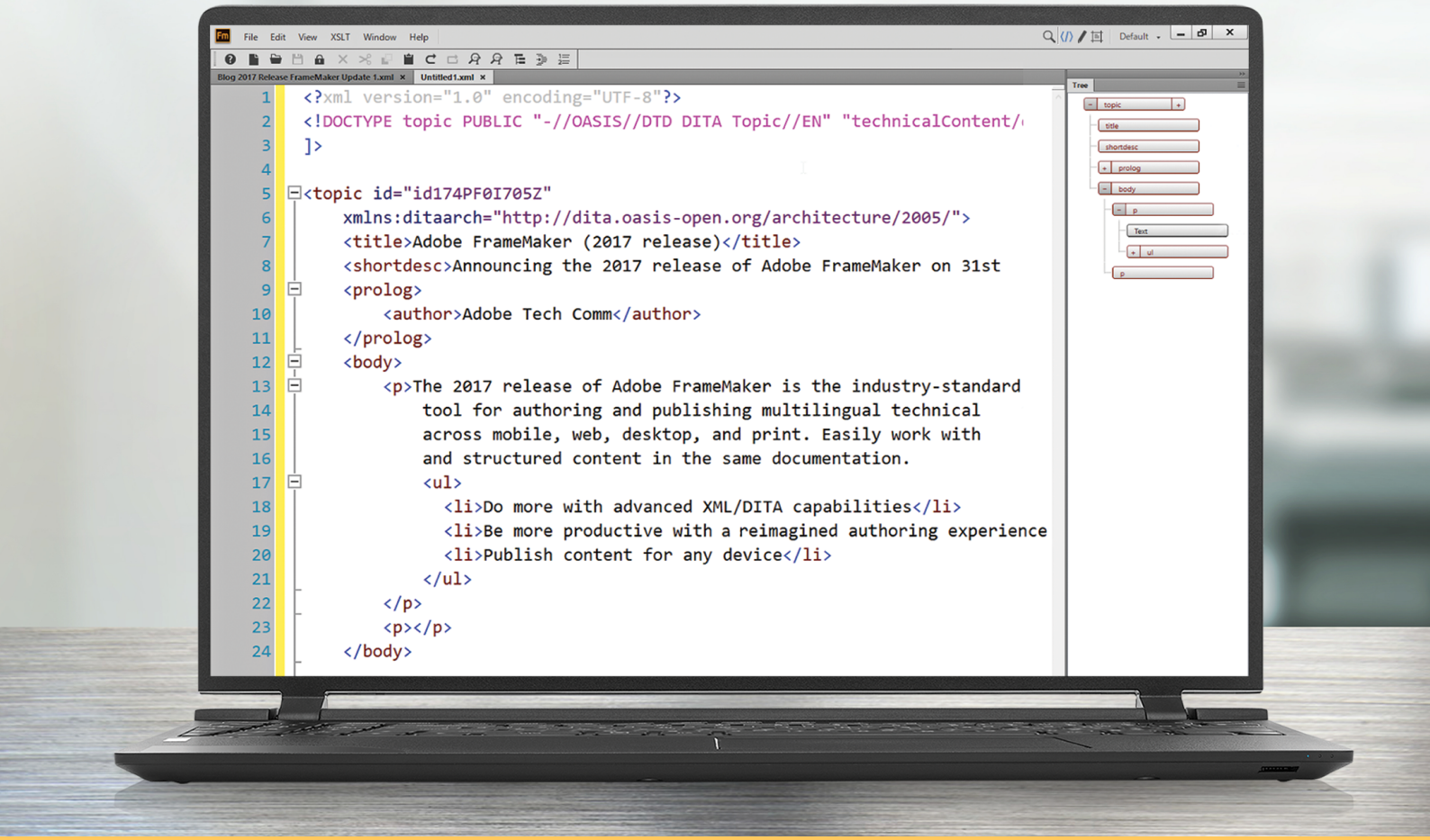

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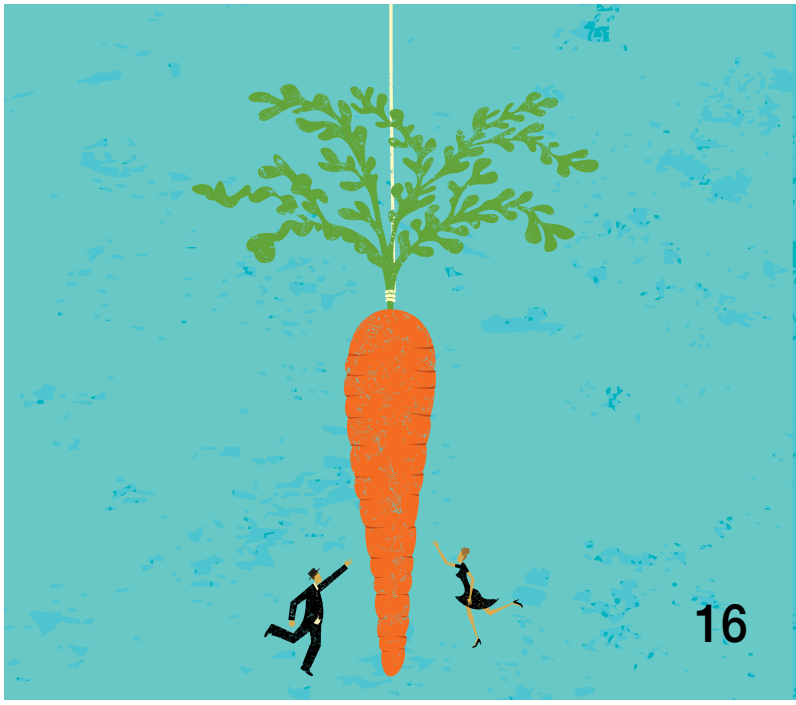

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A Note from the Editor

WHILE HEALTHY, MATURE content organizations are always the goal (I've never heard a team say, "We're aiming to be chaotic and build a toxic culture!"), they always seem to be elusive—aspirational but never achievable.

When I envisioned this issue's theme, The Healthy Content Organization, I wanted to bring together some data, some thought leadership, and some experienced practitioners who all had interesting, enlightening, and most importantly, actionable things to share about how content organizations can excel.

My goal? To get you closer to *your* goal of a healthy organization.

Before you dive into the issue, Figure 1 shows what I believe to be the key hallmarks of a healthy content organization.

Figure 1. The key hallmarks of a healthy content organization

The Content Team

Many technical communicators believe that having a group of skilled writers and editors and a manager who is supportive and fun is all you need. They are baffled when the team is not productive, is not creating valuable content, or is constantly frustrated. While resolute ringleaders and proficient practitioners, as shown in the center of Figure 1, are critical, the ecosystem around the team can quickly kill—or just torture slowly—the soul of a potentially great content organization.

The environment around a great content team, however, will likely never be effective without that healthy core.

Resolute Ringleaders

Without strong leadership, the team flounders. This is the brain—the command center—of the team. A leader treats the content organization like a mini business within the larger product team or company. The other functions on the product team—engineering or R&D, product management, marketing, sales, design, release management, support, etc.—are *partners* to a great content leader, all working together in service of a common client: the company's customer.

This leader need not be a content manager, although it's nice if you have a team that's large and specialized enough to have one. A small team reporting to an engineering or marketing manager can still have strong content

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Intercom, the magazine of the Society for Technical Communication, is published to provide practical examples and applications of technical communication that will promote its readers' professional development.

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Intercom Editorial: intercom@stc.org

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Intercom (ISSN 0164-6206) is published 8 times a year (monthly, except for February, April, June and August) by the Society for Technical Communication, 9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22031-1803, a nonprofit educational organization, as a service to its membership. Membership in STC includes an online subscription to **Intercom**. Periodicals postage paid at Fairfax, VA, and additional offices.
Postmaster Send address changes to **Intercom**, Attn: Membership, c/o Society for Technical Communication, 9401 Lee Highway, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22031-1803.

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leadership—maybe it's *you*! A leader needs vision, goals, and the ability to rally others around that vision to achieve those goals. A leader must influence in all directions—up, down, and to the sides in the corporate hierarchy. There's a lot to unpack in those sentences, but I'm not going to do it here because next month's theme is … wait for it … *leadership*! We'll be exploring that theme in a lot of detail, so don't miss the May/June issue!

Proficient Practitioners

Clearly, there is no team without the folks who envision, plan, architect, design, and develop the content. This is the heart of the team, and the strongest hearts are always moving and being exercised—and the best practitioners don't sit still or rest on the laurels of "table stakes" skills in basic writing and editing.

Highly valued practitioners have a baseline level of skill in all dimensions of the content business—from architecture and project management to writing and editing—and they specialize in at least one. As their teams get bigger (and hopefully—although not always—more mature), they specialize more, going deeper in their skillset, as well as broadening their knowledge to related skills, such as design and usability, product management, and marketing.

The key is to remain teachable. As technical communicators, this is our super power, so use it in every facet of your life: thrive on learning about your next new product, as well as staying current and building depth and breadth in the latest tech comm trends, tools, and methods.

The Content Ecosystem

If leaders and practitioners are the brain and heart of the tech comm team organism, the ecosystem around us is the environment that enables us to maintain life. As Figure 1 shows, we are literally surrounded by the people, products, and processes that we work with (or possibly around) every day. If that environment is less like Earth and more like Mars, it can mean the death of the content organization. Even if we have good protection, like a space suit (in the form of our leader) we will cease to thrive.

An ecosystem that enables content teams to thrive also thrives on content. What does a symbiotic organization look like? It serves customers with prized products, provides solid support, accomplishes goals through optimized operations, and appropriately assesses itself and all of the organisms within it to continually improve in products, support, and operations.

Prized Products

An organization that well understands and appreciates its audience and customers and what they need has the foundation to deliver valuable products. Add to that understanding a talented, cross-functional team of partners, and you end up with products that appreciative customers prize over others. Appreciative audiences and prized products generate pleasing profits.

Solid Support

Understanding of the business value of content and supporting the teams that create that content is not typically something that comes naturally to organizations. This is where your strong leader must play an influential role, evangelizing your team's vision and goals, as well as building partnering relationships with other product-team leaders.

Optimized Operations

One-offs are costly; habits and systems are efficient and make us more effective. We are the kings and queens of procedure. Therefore, we should be the most highly systematized and optimized organizations in our enterprises. If you aren't yet, get on that. Consider what you or your team is doing that doesn't make sense for you. Ask yourself what you could automate to free up precious time for content development or other high-value activities. Is everyone on your team operating at their highest level—could your most senior folks be delegating to those who are becoming more senior? This is how you not only get the

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most valuable results from every team member, but you also build important skills and capability on your team.

Appropriate Assessment

What doesn't get measured, incented, or rewarded doesn't get done. You and your team should be measuring the effectiveness of everything—yourselves, your results, your processes, your content—and the ecosystem around you should also be measured constantly. This is the data that will help you to refine your leadership, your practitioners' skills, your products, your relationships with the people who drive the business you work in, and the systems and practices that enable you to deliver great content to your appreciative audiences every day.

A Note About Role

Notice that specific roles are not one of my hallmarks. Future-focused flexibility (I had to get in one more alliteration) is best supported by an activity- and skill-based approach. As the industry, business, and our customers change, we can quickly pivot in discussions of our value and impact if we converse in these terms. It's difficult to have these conversations as an industry, because every company has its own organization structure, roles, titles, etc., but activities and skills apply equally to all.

In This Issue

As you read further, think about these hallmarks of a healthy team. Where does your team stand? Are you robust and healthy, able to leap tall help systems in a single editing pass? Or are you a little sickly around the edges, not eating enough veggies or getting enough exercise? You will have lots of opportunities to consider these ideas and take action based on the articles in this issue.

Dawn Stevens, President of Comtech Services and Director of the Center for Information-Development Management (CIDM), starts us off with a look at where we are today as an industry in content organization maturity. CIDM has been collecting data for years from content organizations of all sizes, and the 2017 data is interesting. Thank you, Dawn, for breaking it down for us, and exposing the insights in the numbers.

Then Michele Linn, former Vice President of Editorial at the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), and I collaborate on the ultimate guide to your content marketing team! A healthy technical content organization doesn't stop at the boundaries of the technical communication team—you've got to get out of your cube and start making frenemies … I mean friends … with your misunderstood colleagues on the other side of "the buy gap." Thanks, Michele, for the secret treasure map to the content marketing organization. Note that the volume of marketing goodness in this article means that we had abridge it and publish the full version online. See *www.stc.org/intercom* for the full article.

Next, Michael Priestley, Senior Technical Staff Member and Enterprise Content Technology Strategist at IBM, dives into incentives. As we know, we get what we measure and reward! Thank you, Michael, for uncovering some of the common pitfalls of measurement and reward on content teams.

While this issue has some enterprise content team focus, healthy relationships are not the sole purview of corporate staff. Saul Carliner, Professor of Educational Technology at Concordia University, gives freelancers, contractors, and consultants eight strategies for creating healthy relationships with clients. If you are corporate staff, not to worry, as these tips apply to you as well! Thanks, Saul, for tips we can *all* use to better our relationships.

In our last feature, which you can read on *www.stc.org/intercom*, Myra Cook Brown, freelancer, Academic Advisor, and Technical Writer/Editor for Utah State University, explores a specific freelancer-client relationship around style and style guidance. Remember, a healthy content organization has *optimized operations*—and that includes ensuring that consistency, branding, etc., are optimized into our processes. Thank you, Myra, for providing concrete actions that freelancers can take today to better the health of their client relationships. Due to the excitement about this month's theme, we had more content than we could print, so don't miss Myra's article on the *Intercom* website!

We have two new columns this month as well. I'm thrilled to introduce to you Editing Matters and Convergence Conversations. In Editing Matters, Michelle Corbin, a Senior Technical Editor and Information Architect at IBM, tells us in her inaugural column why editing matters *matter* in a healthy content organization. Alan Porter, Head of Strategic Services at [A], addresses the technical communication convergence—not just a healthy relationship with—marketing in the first of his Convergence Conversations. Thank you, Alan and Michelle, for agreeing to bring *Intercom* readers some fresh insights in these areas throughout the year.

If you are wondering what your fellow technical communicators do in their spare time, J. J. Haas, author of *Welcome to Sugarville: A Novel in Stories*, talks about technical writing versus creative writing in the most recent Off Hours.

And, in the Society Pages, we sadly mark the passing of past STC President, Fellow, active member, leader, mentor, and friend David Armbruster. George Hayhoe remembers David, and I will reinforce here that "David never met a stranger." Thank you, George, for so eloquently capturing the spirit of what David meant to those who knew him and the impact he had on the Society and our industry. And thank you, David, for being our friend.

I would love to know what you think of the issue—criticism (constructive, please!) or praise. Comment below (on the website), reach out to me (at my email address below) or to the team (*intercom@stc.org*), or shout out to us on Twitter (*@stc_org*).

— Andrea L. Ames
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Mapping Technical Communication Trends against Best Practices

By DAWN STEVENS

OVER 20 YEARS ago, Dr. JoAnn Hackos developed the information process maturity model, designed to evaluate the overall health of a content organization. Working with a dozen leaders from respected corporations, she identified eight key characteristics that clearly influenced the success of the writing departments. This list expanded to ten characteristics in the years that followed:

- Organizational structure
- Hiring and training practices
- Collaboration
- Budgeting
- Estimating, scheduling, and tracking
- User awareness
- Planning
- Information design
- Quality assurance
- Change management

Clearly, technical communication has evolved significantly since JoAnn's original research—we are no longer technical writers creating books using a desktop publishing system. We are architects, UX designers, taxonomists, and so much more, creating topics, videos, and artificial intelligence using a plethora of tools and standards. New delivery mechanisms and development tools have changed what we do and how we work. Are these same characteristics still important today? Are they still able to accurately predict the performance of an information development team?

The Center for Information Development Management (CIDM), a membership organization founded by JoAnn, monitors these questions regularly. Members participate in monthly roundtable discussions, conference presentations, and yearly benchmarking studies designed to identify trends in the industry and adjust the definition of maturity accordingly. A review of data from 2017 indicates that while specific details within each characteristic have certainly transformed, the characteristics themselves seem to stand the test of time.

Change Management

If one thing remains unwavering over time, it's that change is a constant. Technical communicators must be ready to adapt. In a 2017 CIDM benchmarking study, the importance of change management was highlighted by the frequency of reorganizations that affect the technical communication department. Figure 1 shows the frequency of reorganizations within the CIDM membership base. Almost three-quarters of the represented corporations reorganize at least once every five years, and only 15 percent have never reorganized within the respondent's tenure.

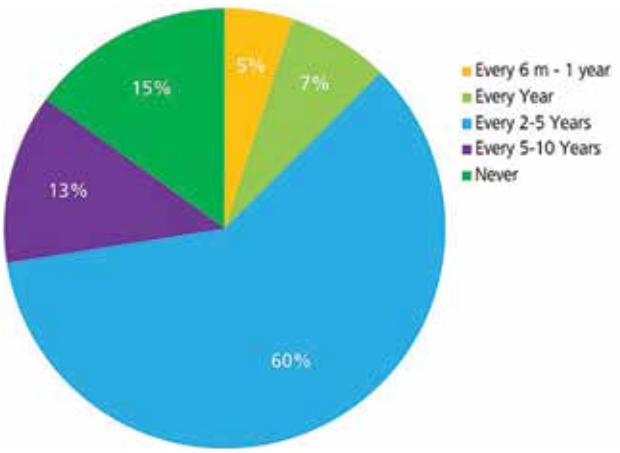

Figure 1. Frequency of reorganizations within CIDM-member companies

Reorganizations occur for many reasons: companies merge with or acquire other companies; sites close or are relocated; departments centralize or decentralize. Regardless of the reason, mature information development organizations continue to function in the chaos these changes bring. They have strong change management practices that ensure team members are kept well informed and that content continues to be produced at the expected rate and quality. Mature teams adjust quickly and even find ways to improve in the process.

Organizational Structure

With the many reorganizations facing information development teams, it's no surprise to observe a pendulum swing between centralized and decentralized organizational structures. Figure 2 shows the current distribution among CIDM members.

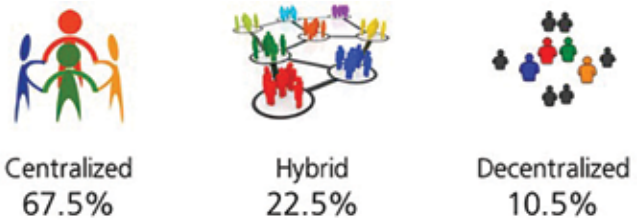

Figure 2. Organizational structure of CIDM-member companies

Although there are advantages to both structures, organizations find the most success when they find a way to centralize key resources, ensuring that content, regardless of where it is developed, conforms to a single corporate style and standard, is readily accessible by all information developers, and can be easily reused across products and groups.

Centralized or not, the CIDM benchmark shows that the majority of information development groups are located either within Development/Engineering (45%) or Customer Support and Services (30%) and most commonly led by a senior manager (34%), director (28%), or senior director (25%).

Hiring and Training Practices

Within an information development group, roles are certainly changing. Information developers are now responsible for more than user guides, including any and all text that appears in the user interface itself, from in-app help to error messages to user interface components. The skills we look for are different than in the past, and often this is reflected in different job titles. Nevertheless, mature hiring strategies continue to prioritize individuals with writing skills, preferably with technical savvy, as shown in Figure 3. Seventy-five percent of CIDM members describe their hiring strategy as "we hire trained technical communicators."

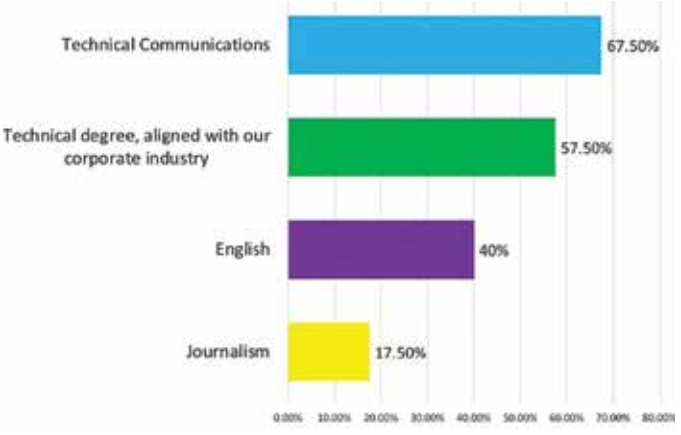

Figure 3. Preferred degree specialty when hiring information developers

Collaboration

Collaboration has always been a critical competency in a mature information development organization, and that has not changed. Publishing end-user materials often requires the coordination, input, and approval of subject matter experts, product managers, as well as legal, safety, marketing, and training organizations. Figure 4 shows the roles that several of these organizations play in user-facing content development at CIDM-member companies.

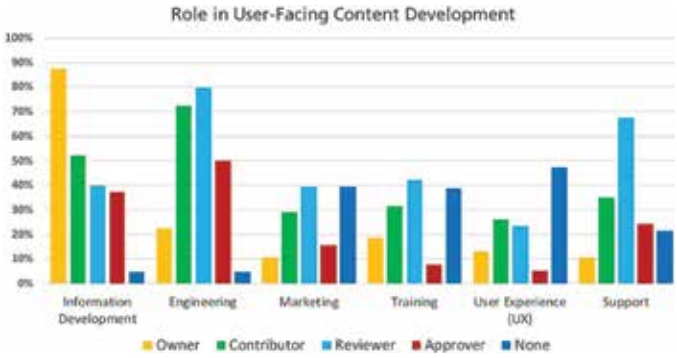

Figure 4. Department roles in user-facing content development

In fact, collaboration is so important that many members report that they have specific initiatives targeted solely at fostering those relationships. Yet in today's global environment, it isn't an easy goal. Eighty-eight percent of CIDM members report that they are distributed across multiple sites, and almost half of those indicate their team is spread over more than five sites.

Planning

With the importance of collaborating with so many teams, information development groups might find themselves spread thin. In a 2016 member study, almost three-quarters of information development teams working in an Agile development organization reported that each information developer supported at least two Scrum teams, with twenty percent supporting more than five (see Figure 5).

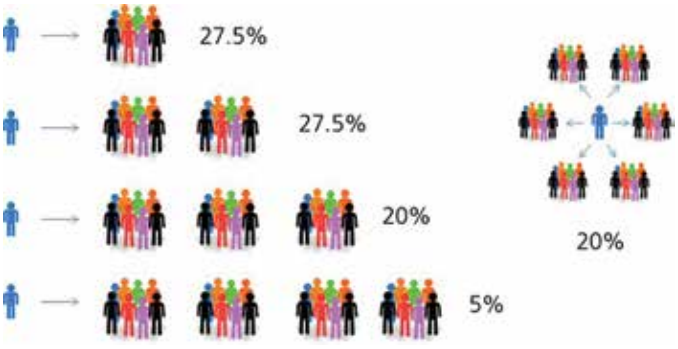

Figure 5. Number of Scrum teams supported by an individual information developer

Obviously, the fewer teams or projects supported, the more attention each person can give to producing superior content, but the actual number of projects or teams an individual can support varies based on industry, type of content being created, experience of the team, and many other factors. Nevertheless, the number one question asked of CIDM continues to be: "What is the appropriate ratio of writer to subject matter expert (SME)?"

As expected, these ratios vary significantly across CIDM members (as shown in Figure 6), leading us to continue to assert that writer to SME ratios themselves are *not* an indicator of process maturity. The differentiator is actually the ability to recognize limits and commit resources appropriately. Mature information development teams plan their activities based on available resources, taking on only the projects or development teams that they have the appropriate head count to support.

Figure 6. Ratio of information developers to product developers

Budgeting, Estimating, Scheduling, and Tracking

The ability to determine the number of projects to commit to (the maturity characteristic of budgeting) or to negotiate an appropriate due date based on the resources available (the maturity characteristic of estimating and scheduling) depends heavily on the availability of good historical metrics (the maturity characteristic of tracking). Mature organizations not only know how much it costs to create various types of content, but also understand the factors that may influence future performance (see Figure 7). Budgets are either set based on the projected workload for the year or influenced by the number of projects the department takes on. Individual projects are estimated and scheduled based on their scope and how they compare to the historical projects. For the duration of each individual project and across the entire year, progress is tracked and performance measured to make incremental adjustments to meet promises.

Unfortunately, no recent CIDM studies reflect current practices in gathering metrics. Our upcoming 2018 benchmarking study will rectify this situation.

Dependency	Ranking					Factor
Product availability	⊙1	○2	○3	○4	○5	0.80
Information availability	○1	⊙2	○3	○4	○5	0.95
Prototype availability	⊙1	○2	○3	○4	○5	0.90
SME availability	○1	○2	○3	⊙4	○5	1.05
Number of reviewers	○1	○2	⊙3	○4	○5	1.00
Writing experience	○1	○2	⊙3	○4	○5	1.00
Technical knowledge	○1	○2	⊙3	○4	○5	1.00
Audience awareness	○1	○2	○3	⊙4	○5	1.05
Tool familiarity	○1	⊙2	○3	○4	○5	0.95
Team collaboration	○1	⊙2	○3	○4	○5	0.95
Adjustment factor						0.68

Figure 7. Project dependencies influencing level of effort

Information Design

Mature organizations do not rest on their laurels, but continually work to improve processes and end products. Although most of these improvements are not visible outside an organization, maturity in the area of information design is manifested in the end products. Without industry leaders demonstrating strong practices in this area, the industry as a whole might still be creating printed user guides. Instead, data from the 2017 CIDM/DCL Trends Survey of almost 400 information development professionals shows that less than 15 percent of the represented organizations still produce printed content. Social content (including videos), mobile content, and dynamic information portals have all overtaken what used to be the norm, and, for the first time since the annual survey has been conducted, HTML topics have overtaken electronic PDF content as the most common type of content (see Figure 8).

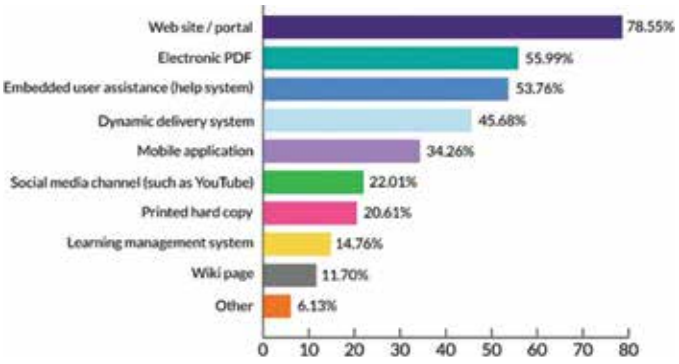

Figure 8. Current delivery mechanisms

Quality Assurance

With the rise in popularity of automated quality checkers, rumors have circulated about the demise of the professional editor. Although quality assurance certainly remains a characteristic of a mature organization, how is it best achieved? Among CIDM members, editors still remain a critical part of the team, with 67 percent reporting they have dedicated editors on staff

(second only to writers, as shown Figure 9). But rather than correcting capitalization, policing word choice, and adding or removing commas, editors in mature organizations are able to concentrate their efforts on developmental editing, allowing quality tools to supplement their primary work—to ensure user needs are met through clear, concise, well-structured content.

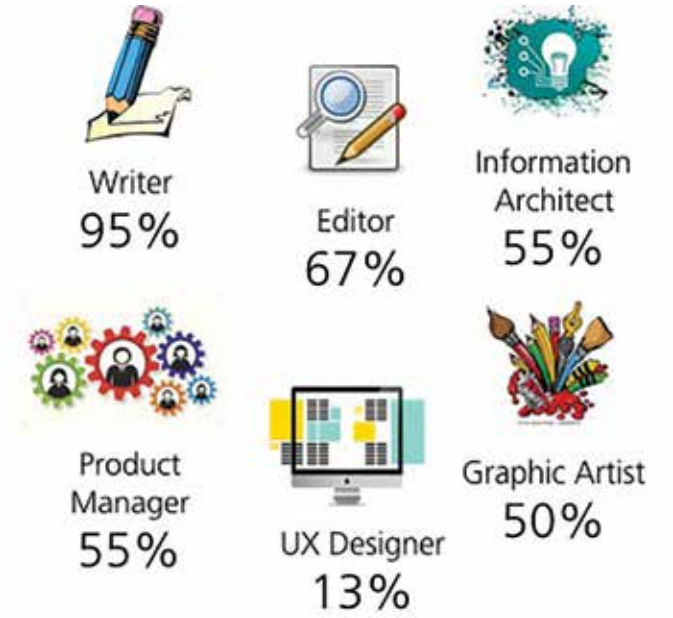

Figure 9. Common roles within the information development team

User Awareness

The proof is in the pudding, as they say. While CIDM members may set an example in managing their content development, what do users think of the final output? Are information developers even aware of user needs and expectations? Are they measuring how well they meet those requirements? Honest answers from CIDM members in 2016 return a somewhat lukewarm response. As shown in Figure 10, 55 percent do believe that users have adequate representation, but a disappointing 22.5 percent report there is still poor or no consideration of user needs during information development.

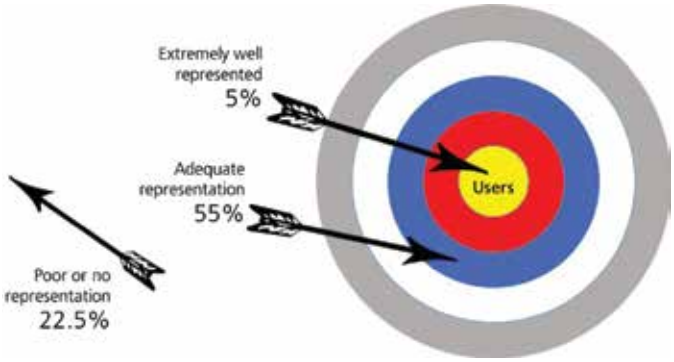

Figure 10. How well user needs and expectations are represented in final deliverables

The fact that some otherwise mature information development organizations are struggling to keep users front and center by no means invalidates its inclusion as a primary indicator of organizational health. Mature organizations recognize their areas of weaknesses and look for ways to improve. Informal data from member discussions and conference polls reveal that user awareness is an area of focus for improvement amongst CIDM members.

The Importance of Information Development

Enrique Jardiel Poncela, a Spanish playwright in the early 1900s, once said, "When something can be read without effort, great effort has gone into its writing." Clearly the characteristics of a mature information development organization take effort, time, and money to develop and maintain. The value of that effort, however, is appreciated by the end user and the corporation alike. As you consider where you are on the road to information development process maturity, keep your eye on the prize: CIDM members report that the contributions of a mature organization are increasingly recognized as critical to the overall success and reputation of the company as a whole (see Figure 11).

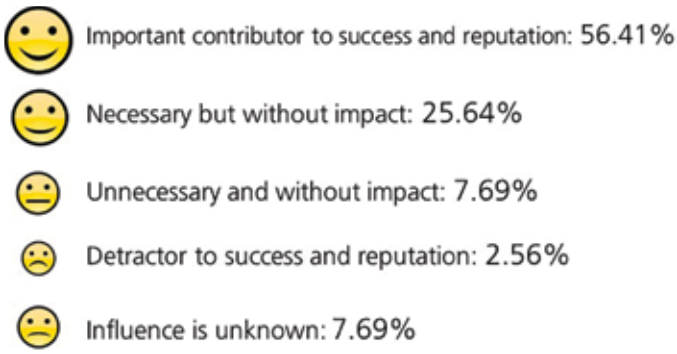
Important contributor to success and reputation: 56.41%
Necessary but without impact: 25.64%
Unnecessary and without impact: 7.69%
Detractor to success and reputation: 2.56%
Influence is unknown: 7.69%

Figure 11. The importance of information development

Interested in more benchmarking data? Want to participate in similar studies? The Center for Information Development Management invites you to join. See *https://www.infomanagementcenter.com/membership/* for information about its benefits and how to join.

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Why Can't We All Just Get Along? Wait! We Can!:

Better Understanding Content Marketing to Build Bridges and Wild Client Success

By MICHELE LINN and ANDREA L. AMES | *STC Fellow*

Additional content for this article is available on *Intercom* online. Please visit *www.stc.org/intercom.*

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ONE MARK OF A HEALTHY content organization is that it doesn't stop at team boundaries or silos. A healthy team understands that content *is* most, if not all, of the experience for our customers, and there are lots of people and teams across the company creating content for that experience. Enter: Marketing!

While there are potentially many content teams—documentation, product training, support—within an organization, especially a large one, marketing is often the most elusive for those of us traditionally seen as creators of post-sales or technical content. We know these content teams are out there, but we rarely talk with them. We know they create content, but often we don't understand their goals or how they plan to accomplish those goals with that content.

At Content Marketing World 2017, Michele Linn, former Vice President of Editorial at the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), presented "Creating the Ultimate Content Marketing Team." Not only was it awesome for the marketing folks in attendance, but as a post-sales content person, Michele's content was like a peek behind a mysterious curtain. Our organizations' marketing teams live in a world most technical communicators don't get much exposure to, but there is tremendous value in understanding how the black box that is your marketing team—and better yet, your content marketing team—works.

Who are those people, you say, and how do I find them in my organization? What do they do? How do my activities and theirs compare, dovetail, overlap? How can or should I collaborate with them? Understanding an organization can tell you a lot about their who, where, and what.

To that end, Andrea asked Michele to collaborate on this article to help technical communicators better relate to their colleagues in marketing. As you read this, look not only toward how you might leverage this knowledge to bridge silos in your organization, but consider also how *your* skills might match the skills found in the ultimate content marketing team. Could content marketing be your next career?

Note that when giving shape to teams, we both shy away from using the term *role* or describing roles. Michele favors discussing *skills*, while Andrea typically refers to *activities*. In this article, Michele describes *skill areas*, and within those, *activities* that a person with those skills might perform within a content marketing organization. Regardless of the term you prefer, we want you to know that we are *not* describing roles. We provide this bit of clarification so that you, dear reader, do not infer that each of the skills described below is equivalent to a role, which might lead you to further infer that unique individuals are required to perform each role. For more discussion of how healthy organizations think about roles, see Andrea's Editor's Note on page 3 of this issue.

Now that we have all of *that* out of the way, let's dive in.

The Skill Areas

What skills are necessary and for what size organizations? The skills are broadly classified based on where your company falls on a spectrum of content marketing maturity, as shown in Figure 1. As CMI research reveals, about one-third of marketers are in the young and first steps categories, another third are in the adolescent stage, and the last third characterize themselves as mature or sophisticated.

Here's how Michele sorts the skill areas based on content marketing organizational maturity. New and young companies need:

- Strategy development
- Editorial planning
- Content creation
- Design
- Editing and proofreading

A content marketing team will need to cover this first set of skills when they are starting out—or if they are struggling and not sure where to go. Every team needs to have someone who possesses these essential skills, but a team will likely not have one person per skill when getting started. Rather, it will have a leader or jack of all trades who will do many of these things. Growing companies should master:

- SEO
- Social media management
- Email management

The next three skills focus on how to get the word out about your content: social media, SEO, and email. Let's address something we know you're thinking: shouldn't new and young companies have these skills on their teams, too? Absolutely. However, as Michele prioritized what skills

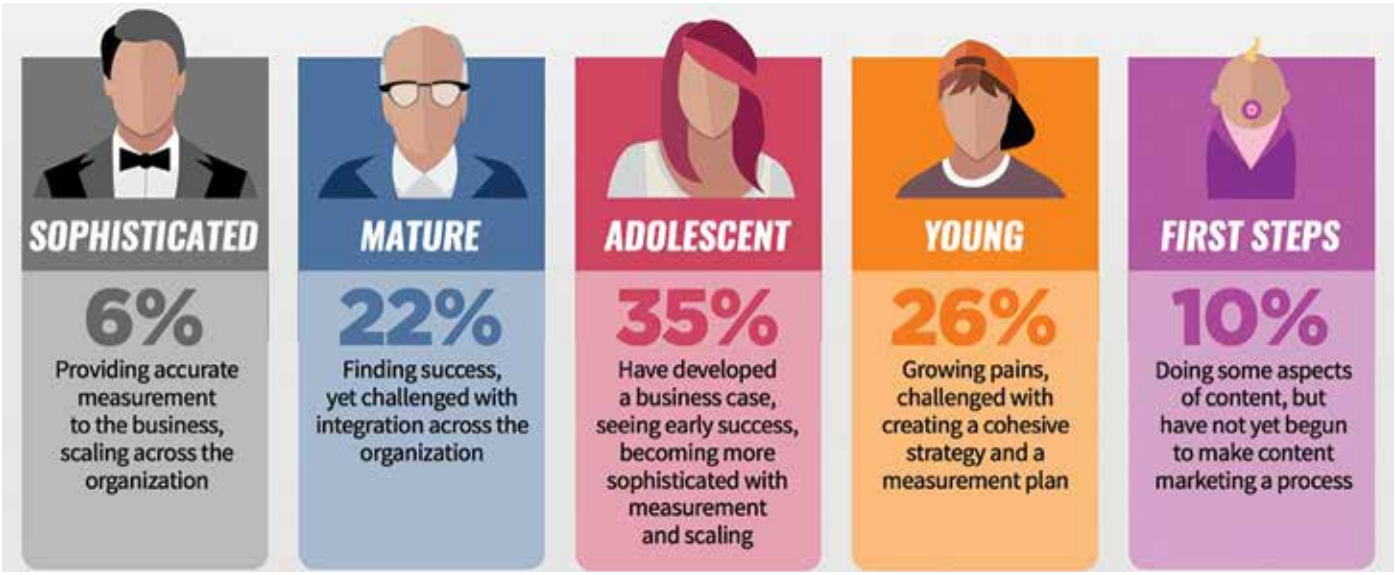
SOPHISTICATED
6%
Providing accurate measurement to the business, scaling across the organization
MATURE
22%
Finding success, yet challenged with integration across the organization
ADOLESCENT
35%
Have developed a business case, seeing early success, becoming more sophisticated with measurement and scaling
YOUNG
26%
Growing pains, challenged with creating a cohesive strategy and a measurement plan
FIRST STEPS
10%
Doing some aspects of content, but have not yet begun to make content marketing a process

Figure 1. How B2B marketers assess their organization's content marketing maturity level

are needed first and reflected on her experiences with building companies, she realized many companies start with someone who has a basic knowledge of each of these skills, and as they grow, they need to build in-depth team knowledge in each of these areas.

Sophisticated and mature companies should then grow their program with these skills after they have the basics covered:

- Digital library management
- Audience acquisition
- Web development and UX
- Research development
- Data analysis
- Technology management

Consider this last set of skills to be growing the content marketing program to become more sophisticated and mature. Of course, if the team has these skills, organizations should bring them in earlier in the process.

Now let's dig into the details of each of the skill areas.

Strategy Development

It's imperative to start out with a solid strategy (and, no, a strategy is not the same as an editorial calendar). Often, a content marketing strategy is created in conjunction with the leadership team, and it sets the stage for the entire program.

While there is no one right way to create a strategy, it should at least answer these three questions (also shown in Figure 2):

- Who are you educating?
- How can you help your audience in a way no one else can?
- How will you know if you are successful?

Figure 2. The strategy development skill area

If you're a technical communicator, you now know that finding your company's chief content officer, vice president, or director of marketing could give you more insight into the strategy behind the content marketing. They could probably provide a glimpse into the overall marketing strategy as well. You might also find that they have access to market research that could be useful to you. They are a wealth of information if you can track them down.

If you have a relationship with someone in marketing already, regardless of their title, you might now have some additional options for requesting the team's strategy. Perhaps you've been asking for a content strategy, and they are saying they don't have one. But if you ask for their CCO's strategy or plans or direction for the upcoming year, you might have more luck.

Editorial Planning

First comes strategy, then comes editorial planning.

The editorial plan is everything you need to do to bring a content marketing strategy to life. The topic of editorial planning is far bigger than one section of this article can encompass, but below are some of the key things it entails.

In many cases, multiple people on a content marketing team assist with editorial planning—people who come at it from different perspectives. For instance, someone on the team must think about all the new content to be published and answer questions, such as:

- What topics should the team cover—and how?
- What formats are best for the purposes of that content?
- What is the internal process or workflow for creating this content?
- What are the standards for publication, such as writing guidelines and style guides?

Other editorial planning professionals look at the content across the lifecycle and consider questions, such as:

- What is our organization's taxonomy? How will the marketing content be organized?
- How will the team determine what content to keep, update, or remove?

Figure 3. The editorial planning skill area

At this point, the names of things might be starting to throw you off. In our world, editorial planning is typically a schedule for how new documentation or training is copy or developmentally edited. Many of the other activities, like determining what content needs to be created, are handled by folks with other titles—possibly content strategists, information architects, or team lead/project managers.

The most useful mental exercise that you can undertake at this point is to stop thinking about your content marketing team in your terms. Turn them into an audience, and start thinking about them, their goals and tasks, their deliverables, etc., in *their* terms.

Many content marketing professionals come from publishing and journalism. This is important to understand for lots of reasons, not just organizational ones. Now Michele's description might be looking familiar. "Aha!" you might be thinking. "*That's* where *this* notion of editorial planning comes from!" If you consider a magazine or newspaper, who's really calling the day-to-day shots? The editor!

Knowing all of this, you not only decide who to contact, but you can also shape your conversations to use the right terms and speak from the right context to ensure your marketing counterpart understands what you're saying. This is so important when so many of our terms—like *editor*—overlap and mean something very different.

Content Creation

When Michele chats with marketers about their teams, the biggest cry she hears is for someone to create the content: often writers, but also videographers, podcasters, etc.

While hiring an exceptional content creator is absolutely vital, great content marketing teams have a strategy and editorial plan in place first so the new talent can focus on content that will further the organization's mission. Never start a content marketing team with the content creators.

Figure 4. The content creation skill area

Of course, not all writers (or any type of content creators) are created equal. Some writers excel at writing persuasive copy (á la Aristotle) that can be used in emails and on websites; some create masterful stories that dig into personalities; and others craft prescriptive, how-to content. Great content marketing team leaders figure out what the team needs and find the person who best suits those needs.

Michele expected this opinion to be an unpopular one (it likely *is* in marketing circles); content creators who have a deep understanding of your company's industry are key. In this age of so much content, content marketing needs to provide the best content on the selected topics, and people who are most experienced in the subject industry are more likely to deliver the right content most efficiently and effectively.

We don't think anyone in this crowd will find the requirement for industry knowledge to be objectionable. That's our forte. As is how-to content, and that's a place we understand well, which means it's a strength we can bring to the conversation with marketing.

Design

Ah, design. Michele originally considered rolling design under content creation, but in the end, she decided to break out this skill because often the designer is a different person than a writer, podcaster, etc.

Like writers, designers often excel in different areas. Some are fabulous with website design, others rock data, and others have a penchant for e-books (just to name a few).

Many companies have designers in-house, but for content marketing teams that are just getting started, crowdsourcing design could be an option.

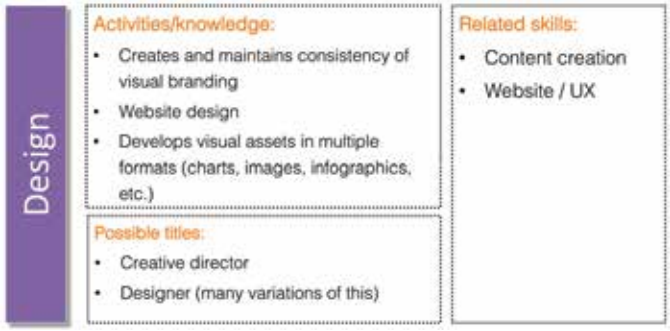
Design
Activities/knowledge:
• Creates and maintains consistency of visual branding
• Website design
• Develops visual assets in multiple formats (charts, images, infographics, etc.)
Possible titles:
• Creative director
• Designer (many variations of this)
Related skills:
• Content creation
• Website / UX

Figure 5. The design skill area

When it comes to design in content marketing, it's a good idea, again, to understand where many content marketers come from: agencies, such as marketing and advertising agencies. Design in agencies is different than design in product teams. There are certainly some similarities and some overlap, but technical communicators tend to think of *design* as interaction design and visual design of graphical user interfaces and conceptual diagrams and data visualizations to support technical product content. Sometimes design and UX (user experience) are used synonymously.

Andrea loves that Michele calls out that designers often excel in different areas. Don't forget that when you are talking with your content marketing counterparts. Our designers and their designers are all part of that larger design pool—we're just seeing different specific skill sets in product design. Also note that marketing designers are not just graphic designers creating collateral—web design, data visualizations (hey, that sounds familiar), and other design skills have applicability to technical product content, too!

Slight tangent: All of this terminology soup makes you want to sit down and write a huge glossary of terms that spans every content practice, doesn't it? Several have been written around different aspects of the industry, but there's still little agreement—that's the hard part. Those that have been written tend to come from one aspect of the field or another, with little or no input from "the other guys," even when the authors/editors attempt to cover the entire content industry, including corporate marketing, employee communications, product content, marketing, documentation, training, and technical support. It's a can of worms.

Editing and Proofreading

Another essential skill area is in proofreading. In fact, when building a new content marketing team, this is the skill that Michele would look for immediately after identifying the lead person who often focuses on strategy, editorial planning, and content creation. She learned from (painful and embarrassing) experience that you simply can't do your own writing and editing (well, you can't do it well). Always have that second set of eyes to check for grammatical errors.

As a content marketing practice grows, the team will benefit from not only a proofreader but also an editor (or editors). While most editors have a solid understanding of grammar and spelling, editors are also able to review a piece and tell the author whether the story is being told in a clear and compelling way or if the piece makes sense as part of the greater whole.

As with writers, it often makes sense to hire editors who have experience with the subject industry (it does not matter as much with proofreaders unless the industry is especially technical or specific). Again, a great content marketing team wants content to be best-in-class, so it's helpful to have someone who can ask the tough questions and be knowledgeable about industry trends to ensure the content is presenting the best possible solutions.

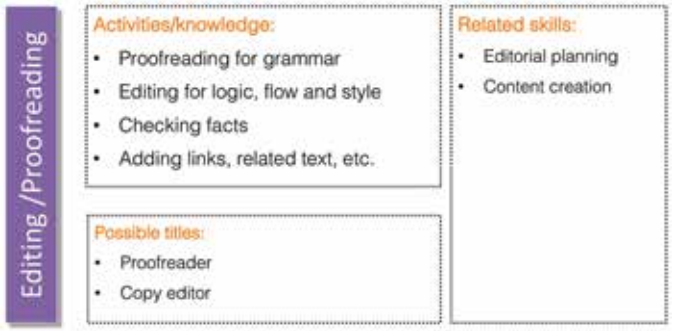

Figure 6. The editing and proofreading skill area

As with content creation, this is a no-brainer skill area for technical communicators. Most know that these folks are critical to product technical content and consider them the final arbiters of quality. Most of these editors, likewise, are of the variety that Michele describes who can identify clarity and flow issues, as well as ensure a fit with the larger whole.

Editor's note: Due to space constraints, the remainder of this article can be read online on www.stc.org/intercom.

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Incentives, OR When to Tax the Rat Farm

By MICHAEL PRIESTLEY

MEASURING PERFORMANCE is becoming an increasingly popular topic—from the performance of content to the performance of people. Tied closely with the idea of measuring performance is the concept of incentives. With the best of intentions, we provide encouragement to move toward a performance metric using incentives, rewarding achievement of goals, such as increased content reuse. Often the result is less than optimal. Why?

Where are you going?

Before you begin, you need to know where you want to end. That's as true of incentives as it is of road trips, or article writing.

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It should be easy to have clear goals, but it's trickier than it seems. Consider some typical ways of thinking about measuring content performance. Do you want to increase page views? Or is that actually a proxy for increased visits that will (hopefully) turn into more sales, assuming a consistent ratio of views to conversions?

The metrics you choose to measure progress can affect not only the journey but the destination. Do you measure productivity by volume published? Congratulations for wrecking your customer search experience. Do you measure content success based on page engagement (whether viewers click on a link *in* the page)? Congratulations on a strategy that will relegate every page that actually answers a customer's need to the dustbin.

Now add people into the mix. Creating effective metrics and incentives gets even trickier when you look at how different parts of an organization should work together to serve larger goals. If you have a technical communication department with incentives to reduce support calls, and a support department with incentives based on number of calls resolved, then you have a disincentive for support to work with the documentation team.

One of my favorite quotes is from Lou Gerstner's book *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?* about his years leading IBM's turnaround in the 1990s. "You don't get what you expect," he wrote, "you get what you inspect."

Another of my favorite quotes is from Terry Pratchett's *Guards! Guards!*, which is not about IBM. In the novel, a city is plagued by rats, so the rulers put a bounty on them. At first there are many bounties collected, then they taper off, as you'd expect. But then the number of bounties start going up again. What's the answer? "Tax the rat farms."

How do you make sure that your incentives are actually encouraging progress toward your goals (for example, a cohesive end to end customer experience, or fewer rats), instead of away from them (for example, documentation and support portals that compete with each other, and more rats)?

Where are you starting from?

After you have your end goal identified, look at the bigger picture. Understand what other incentives are in play, both explicit and implicit. Before you know how to get where you're going, you need to know where you're starting from.

Let's say your goal is to increase the number of customers who successfully achieve their goal (or at least made progress toward it) using your website content. First, you need to understand what the problem is. What is preventing your customers from accomplishing their goals today? Is it a lack of the right content? Or does the content exist, but they can't find it? Or maybe it exists, and they can find it, but it's confusing or contradictory?

Depending on the problem (where you're starting from), you might pursue different strategies and incentives, such as reducing content currently on your website to increase findability of the most valuable content, or targeting a *focused* increase in content to cover key gaps, or consolidating content that is redundant to make what's left easier to find.

The metrics you choose to measure progress can affect not only the journey but the destination.

Let's say you decide to pursue a consolidation strategy. You want your writers to be aware of what content already exists before they create new content, and to reuse instead of rewrite so the customer doesn't end up with two contradictory sources for the information they need.

You may choose to have incentives for:

- Creating high-quality content (you'll still need this; the point is to get more use out of it)
- Reusing content (so your writers don't default to writing new content all of the time)
- Creating content that is reusable (so writers will prepare their content for reuse, and collaborate with potential reusers)

At the end of the day, though, you still need to determine whether the customer experience is affected. Are you actually getting rid of rats, or have you just funded a rat farm?

Whatever incentives you choose, the key is to keep testing and evaluating them. Keep an eye on the larger goal, and remember that your strategies are not ends in themselves: high-quality content is meaningless if no one is using it, and reuse of low-quality content is worse than no reuse at all.

What will you do when you get there?

A final point, from my experience as a parent: sometimes you need incentives to change behavior—to create new habits, or break old ones. But as a parent, my ultimate goal isn't to have children who just follow the carrot wherever it leads (although it would be nice if they cared more about carrots). I want them to learn to do the right thing—whatever that is—based on their own judgment and values. Incentives are a way for leaders to signal priorities to their teams, but they should reflect, and ultimately be subsumed by, the culture of the company. Part of any journey is knowing when you've arrived.

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Eight Tips for Healthy Contractor Relationships with Clients

By SAUL CARLINER | *STC Fellow*

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ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING relationships for technical communicators is the contractor-client relationship. Contractors work for a period of time on a defined project, sometimes directly contracting with the client and sometimes going through an agency. That arm's-length relationship creates much of the stress in the partnership.

Both the contractor and client play key roles in ensuring healthy relationships. Following are some tips to help contractors manage their relationships with clients and, in doing so, strengthen the health of those relationships.

1. The client is always right.

If this is true in retail, it's especially true when providing a service.

Although clients nominally hire contractors for their expertise, they really hire contractors for a relationship. Key elements in that relationship are the ability to grasp the messages the client wants to communicate, the audiences to whom they hope to communicate the messages, and the technologies that form the subject of the communication. Furthermore, although the contractor does not work for the organization, the contractor's work must still integrate seamlessly with it—consistent in style and terminology, and using the same publishing systems as the rest of the organization.

Although clients nominally hire contractors for their expertise, they really hire contractors for a relationship.

In some instances, the client does not provide sufficiently clear instructions. In such instances, work with the client to clarify their needs and, if asked, offer suggestions.

In other instances, clients want to approach work differently than you might. But challenging clients too forcefully on these issues is not a sign of professionalism; it's a sign of rude customer service.

Even if the client is always right, they might not make things easy. In such instances, rather than challenge the client, ask the client why they choose to do things in a particular way. In some instances, they have a valid reason. In other instances, ask if they are interested in learning about alternatives. When they are, you have a teachable moment. When they're not, concede the point. (Of course, you should refuse any unethical or illegal requests.)

You don't work for the client organization, you work for a service organization that works for the client and your employer, or yourself.

2. Document everything.

As the best products offer clear, easy-to-understand documentation, so the best client-contractor projects are based on clear, easy-to-understand, and formally agreed-upon documentation.

As Geary Rummler and Alan Brache—who studied work processes that cross organizational boundaries—observed, clarifying the "white spaces" illuminates expectations so the work provided by one party (the contractor) matches the expectations of the other (the client). Such work also clarifies dependencies (such as the timely completion of reviews).

To fully clarify expectations, project plans from a contractor should address the following issues:

- Responsibilities of all parties, specifically identifying who produces which deliverables (like drafts) and the types of contributions that other stakeholders are expected to make to those deliverables (like reviews).
- Schedules for submitting deliverables, reviews, review meetings, and other pertinent events.
- Quality standards, which should specify editorial guidelines (such as style guides), design guidelines (such as corporate identity requirements and templates), technical guidelines (which specify publishing software and versions to use, file naming conventions, and similar production requirements), and viewing requirements (such as the types of devices on which users can view the content).
- Content included and the audience(s) to whom that content is geared. If possible, also document which content will not be included and which audiences will not be addressed.
- Handling of problems, including changes of scope (who approves, provisions for extra time and cost to client), failures to meet schedules (both failures by the contractor to provide deliverables and failure of the client to provide reviews), and failures to meet quality standards (who pays for do-overs).
- Reporting of status: who reports it, what the report covers, the frequency of reporting, and who receives it.

Depending on the nature of the contractor relationship, the contractor prepares the project plan in some instances; a project manager or account manager for an agency prepares the plan in others. If someone prepares the plan on your behalf, request clarification on all of these issues. If the person preparing the plan does not have answers for some of these issues, request that they seek clarification.

3. Allow direct communication among all relevant stakeholders.

Agencies with accounts often like to control the communication by their staffs with clients. So, for example, rather than a technical communicator interviewing a subject matter expert in the client organization, the account executive passes along questions from the technical communicator to an intermediary, who sends them to the subject matter expert, who passes the responses back through the same channel, usually in written form.

One can appreciate the instinct to control communication. It reduces the likelihood of miscommunication between the client and contractor organizations, and it might even seem more efficient.

[T]he person who writes the content must fully grasp the material, including nuance of use. That ideally comes from direct interaction with the product or service.

The problem is—when it comes to technical information about the product—the person who writes the content must fully grasp the material, including nuance of use. That ideally comes from direct interaction with the product or service, and subject matter experts. That nuance is almost always lost in the chain of communication.

The result is disappointing drafts that require extensive—and probably avoidable—levels of revision. The benefits of clear and simple communication lines are obliterated by the misunderstandings and off-track content that results. This, in turn, erodes trust between the contractor and client.

Allow client SMEs and contractors to communicate directly.

4. Build confidence by sending status reports.

Clients contract for technical communication services because they lack the resources in-house to produce all of the content they need. But they depend on the projects being completed on schedule, because the content usually supports a much broader effort, like the launch of a new product or organizational initiative. So the client maintains an ongoing interest in the status of the communication project because it affects the success of the broader effort.

Expect clients to ask about the status of the work. Status updates should therefore be included in your initial project documentation.

But if not, provide reports anyway to address the natural concern of clients that you will complete their work on time and within budget. Take the initiative to send reports. The reports should identify:

- Most recently completed milestone and whether that occurred on time, early, or late (and if late, why).
- Next milestone, who has responsibility for meeting it, and whether it is likely to occur on schedule, early, or late (and if late, once again, explain why).
- Major issues that need to be resolved.

The frequency of reporting varies by project and client, but should occur at least once a month. The first status report might take time to prepare, but subsequent reports can leverage the first and will take less time to prepare.

By taking the initiative to report the status of projects, you also build trust in the client that you can produce the content for which they contracted on the agreed-upon schedule.

5. Meet your deadlines.

One of the best ways of building confidence in your skills and trust with clients is meeting your deadlines.

But deep trust also emerges from the sensitive handling of problems. And one common problem on projects is missing deadlines.

When that happens—take the initiative to tell the client. Don't fool yourself: clients notice missed deadlines. What they also notice is whether anyone told them. If you have a good reason for missing a deadline, clients will understand.

When telling a client that you will miss a deadline, in addition to telling them, also state when you will have the materials and thank them for their patience. Ideally, tell clients at least one business day before missing a deadline, or earlier if possible.

6. Seek feedback.

Because contractors are not employees of their client organizations, employment laws often prevent clients from providing a formal performance appraisal of the work.

That's too bad, because an appraisal of the work provides valuable developmental feedback and can help strengthen the contractor's long-term employability.

But nothing prevents you from asking for feedback on your work. So do.

Don't just ask for positive feedback. Growth as a professional and long-term employability emerge from addressing the problem areas. So ask questions like: "What could I have done better?" and "If you were to recommend one or two areas for me to strengthen, what would they be?"

7. Clients pay.

Occasionally, clients will ask to see work before hiring a contractor. A portfolio is certainly acceptable.

But producing something new and of value to the client (such as an audience analysis or a graphic design) is not. This is the work you do for a living, and you have a right to be paid for it. Furthermore, the types of clients who request these free samples will use them without paying for or acknowledging them.

This is called *spec work* and some professional codes of ethics bar it to ensure that individuals always get paid for their work.

8. Listen.

The best way to build a strong relationship with clients is to simply listen to them. Acknowledge what they say by using their words when describing their goals and expectations for the project.

SAUL CARLINER *(saulcarliner@hotmail.com) is a Professor of Educational Technology at Concordia University in Montreal, a Fellow and past international President of STC, and Chair of the* Intercom *Advisory Committee.*

Stay Awhile...

BY ANDY ROMERO and DAN VOSS | *STC Student Member and STC Fellow*

ENJOY A MYRIAD of attractions and diverse events during your stay in Central Florida. Be entertained, enriched, and "epicureanized" with your family and friends while exploring unique neighborhood establishments and events, as well as major amusement park attractions. So Stay Awhile! See all Orlando has to offer.

Editor's Note

We would like to acknowledge STC member Nick Ducharme for coordinating and editing this series of articles from the Orlando Central Florida Chapter promoting the Summit in Orlando. His time and effort are greatly appreciated.

Be Entertained...

5–6, 12–13, and 19–20 May. LEGOLAND Star Wars. Guests enjoy seven famous scenes from six *Star Wars* movies in LEGOLAND. This family-friendly attraction lets guests experience major events in the beloved saga and unveils *The Force Awakens* MINILAND Model Display.

5, 12, and 19 May. Viva La Musica, SeaWorld Orlando and Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. Guests celebrate the annual Latin-themed music event with food, fun, and fabulous concerts.

10–13 May. Jazz New Smyrna Beach Blues Festival. Immerse yourself in one of America's most celebrated music genres in a music-filled journey rich with history, tradition, and diversity, featuring scores of bands at multiple locations.

Andy Romero

The breath-taking Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Orlando draws a wealth of top-of-the-line theater, entertainment, and culture to Central Florida.

Joseph M. Arseneau /Shutterstock

Star Wars character R2-D2 constructed out of Lego bricks on display at Legoland Florida.

11–13 May. Dare to Dream Disney on Ice. Disney lights up the Orlando Amway Center with this curtain-raising Moana live production. Magical Disney characters like Belle and Mickey pursue their dreams in an unforgettable figure-skating extravaganza.

15–28 May. Fringe Festival. Celebrating its 27th year, the Orlando Fringe Festival, set in multiple venues at Loch Haven Park, features a broad spectrum of avant garde theater and unique entertainment ranging from family-friendly to adult-only. It also includes a fine arts exhibit, a "Kids Fringe," food trucks, and a beer and wine tent.

18 May. Dr. Phillips Fast Forward. Audiences experience the passionate, talented dancers of the Orlando Ballet School and classical and contemporary music of the Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra in a showcase event at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.

24–27 May. Megacon. Just a stone's throw down International Drive from the Hyatt Regency Orlando, this four-day event focuses on comics, sci-fi, horror, anime, and gaming. It's the largest event of its kind in the Southeast, attracting 100,000+ fans each year.

25–27 May. Country 500, Daytona Beach. The world-famous Daytona International Speedway exchanges race cars for marquee country music stars (Toby Keith, Chris Stapleton, Dierks Bentley, Billy Currington, Tyler Farr, Randy Houser, and more) in the 3rd annual Great American Music Fest.

26–27 May. Tampa Bay Margarita Festival. Everclear headlines an all-star entertainment cast as you "waste away" on multifarious margaritas and a tempting tequila tasting.

Thru 28 May. EPCOT International Flower and Garden Festival. This must-see event enables adults and kids alike to enjoy inspirational exhibits, outdoor concerts, and breathtaking garden spaces and wildlife habitats.

Thru May. Orlando Jazz Events. For events at nine local jazz clubs, as well as free 24-hour jazz broadcasting, check WUCF 89.9 at *https://tunein.com/radio/WUCF-899-s23356/.*

Theater Events

18 May–10 June. *The Glass Menagerie.* Tennessee Williams, Sonnetag Theater at the Icehouse, Mt. Dora, FL.

4–20 May. So far, five May events are scheduled at this world-class entertainment complex at Dr. Phillips Center, downtown Orlando. For updates, see *https://www.drphillipscenter.org/events/.*

May TBD. Bob Carr Auditorium, downtown Orlando. **May show at this storied Orlando theater is not yet announced:** check *https://www.drphillipscenter.org/explore/theaters-spaces/bob-carr-theater/*

Be Enriched…

12 April–18 May. Annual Juried Digital, Graphic, and Fine Art Exhibition, Valencia College. Just up Kirkman Road from International Drive, enjoy a fine art collection of photography, painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, and graphic design, including interactive works by talented VCC students.

12–13 May. Polk Museum of Art Mayfaire-by-the-Lake. A short drive down I-4 to Lakeland, FL, one of Florida's oldest and largest outdoor art shows features 165 exhibits, showcasing a broad spectrum of arts and crafts and other festival events.

13 May. Free Family Funday *Presented by* Mennello Museum of American Art. Create a miniature fine art project with family and friends and free docket touring. Each Free Family Funday has a different theme based on the current exhibition in the museum.

17 May. Third Thursday Gallery Hop Downtown. This art celebration features numerous galleries and non-traditional art venues that spotlight the best of established and emerging Central Florida artists.

27 May. Orlando Downtown Carnival. The original Orlando Carnival Association hosts its 31st annual Big Carnival Celebration. This year's family-friendly festival celebrates Caribbean culture with pageantry, arts, crafts, music, and cuisine.

Thru May. The Mt. Dora Experience. Featuring art galleries, unique shops, top-notch restaurants, and more, this quaint "artsy" little town off the beaten path northeast of Orlando is a miniature version of world-famous Winter Park.

Thru May. Harry P. Leu Gardens. May is an ideal time to experience fragrant, floral Florida by exploring this amazing 50-acre botanical oasis. Roses will be in full bloom—and moms enter free on 13 May!

Thru May. Museum of Seminole County History. The 1-hour History and Paranormal Tours at this hidden little gem in Sanford, FL, offer fascinating insight into Central Florida history, including Native American artifacts, military memorabilia, historical documents, hauntings, and more.

Matthew Kaiser 7/Shutterstock

The Mennello Museum of American Art in Orlando is a must-see for art lovers—both inside and out.

Thru May. Central Florida Zoo and Botanical Gardens. While of modest size, this family-friendly attraction off I-4 in Sanford, FL, offers a fascinating look at Florida flora and fauna, including endangered species from Florida and around the world.

Be Epicureanized…

12 May. Second Annual Taste of Soul. Located at Festival Park in downtown Orlando, this family feast features sights, sounds, and tastes of the African American and diverse cultures that bring us soul food.

12–13 May. Jazz on the Vineyard Green, Lakeridge Winery. Wine, dine, and enjoy talented jazz musicians and complimentary winery tours and wine tastings in the scenic rolling hills of Clermont, FL, west of Orlando.

19 May. Beer 'Merica. Celebrating American Craft Beer Week, Beer 'Merica at Gaston Edwards Park on Lake Ivanhoe in Orlando features 100 craft U.S.A. brews to sample, plus live music, food trucks, an adult Play Zone, and more!

25–27 May. Palatka Blue Crab Festival. Just two hours north of

Romrodphoto/Shutterstock

Have you ever wanted to feed a giaraffe? Now you can. Learn more at the Central Florida Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

Orlando, this annual Memorial Day Weekend event is a must-see for all who love sun, seafood, country music, and arts and crafts.

25–27 May. Florida Folk Festival, White Springs. Feast on collard greens and cornbread, chicken pilau and hoppin' john, shrimp gumbo, barbecue, curries, gyros, kumquat pie, and lime fizzes at one of America's oldest folk festivals, way down upon the Suwannee River west of Jacksonville.

Andy Romero

Famous for its Oakwood Smoked Ribs and Bento Box, Pig Floyd's Urban Barbakoa at SR 50 (Colonial) and Mills tops the epicurean hit parade in Orlando.

For good measure, here are 10 of Orlando's finest eateries:

1. Pig Floyd's Urban Barbakoa, Mills/Colonial (SR 50), Park Lake/Lake Highland (**best BBQ**)
2. Bar Harbor Seafood, S. John Young Pkwy (**lobster roll**)
3. Kimchi's Korean Grill, downtown Orlando (**kimchi**)
4. The Rusty Spoon, downtown Orlando/(**slow-braised lamb sandwich**)
5. The Leaky Cauldron, Diagon Alley Universal Studios (**specialty chicken sandwich and butterbeer**)
6. Café Tu Tu Tango, International Drive (**tapas and dynamite shrimp**)
7. Sticky Rice Lao Street Food, Mills/Colonial (SR 50) (**mango sticky rice**)
8. The Stubborn Mule, South Eola, Thornton Park (**hand-crafted mule cocktails**)
9. Pepe's Cantina, Winter Park/ downtown Orlando (**the Mexican burger**)
10. Pio Pio, International Drive (***pollo a la brasa***)

So stretch your Summit stay! Enjoy our Central Florida theme parks, but while you're here, see how much more we have to offer as well.

On the Menu: Your Guide to Eating during the Orlando Summit

BY EMILY WELLS | *STC Student Member*

WHILE MOST PEOPLE think of theme parks and other attractions, Orlando has something else to offer: amazing food. And with the official 2018 Summit hotel located right on International Drive (I-Drive), the choices are endless. From chain restaurants to mom-and-pop diners, Asian to Coastal Florida cuisine, I-Drive offers options for everyone.

If you're looking to stay in the hotel, you have three popular options right in the hotel: **Urban Tide**, featuring seafood and Coastal Florida cuisine; **Fiorenzo Italian Steakhouse**, featuring Milan-inspired dishes prepared in an open kitchen; and **The B-Line Diner**, featuring comfort food served 24 hours a day.

For those wanting to stretch their legs, try one of the restaurants at the nearby **Pointe Orlando**. **The Funky Monkey Bistro & Bar** serves Asian-American cuisine and has over 100 different wines. The food was so good, Executive Chef Ashley Nickell was featured on the Food Network, where Gordon Ramsay said she was "born to cook" on Hell's Kitchen. Another option is **Taverna Opa**, a Greek restaurant known as much for its food as for its hopping entertainment, including nightly belly dancing and live music. If you're looking for a more relaxing atmosphere, try **Cuba Libre Restaurant & Rum Bar**. Be taken back to 1950s Havana for some delicious Cuban cuisine and drinks. Or, if you're looking for some Italian, try **Maggiano's** made-from-scratch food, including a delicious bruschetta bar.

Looking for a quick or familiar meal? Don't worry, there are many chain restaurants in the area including McDonald's, TGI Fridays, Johnny Rockets, Red Lobster, Pizza Hut, Olive Garden, Friendly's, and Denny's.

Want to explore on your own?

If you're looking to explore further down I-Drive, as part of the Hyatt Regency Orlando resort fee, guests receive two tickets for the I-Drive Trolley every day. Running daily from 8:00 AM–10:30 PM, the Trolley has two lines, the Red Line and the Green Line. Arriving every 20-30 minutes, the Red Line trolleys stay on I-Drive while the Green Line trolleys cover other roads. If you take the Trolley, you can visit I-Drive 360, home of the Orlando Eye and even more food choices, such as **Tapa Toro**, serving up delicious Spanish cuisine and entertainment; **Tin Roof Orlando**, where musicians gather to play and where the food is "better than bar food"; and **Yard House**, serving up an eclectic collection of food (including a vegetarian menu) and over 100 beers on tap.

Finally, if you're looking to try new food while saving money, there are several ways to do so. To start, both AARP and AAA offer discounts at local restaurants. Another option are websites Restaurant.com and RetailMeNot. Restaurant.com offers discounted certificates for local restaurants, such as a "spend $5 for $25" certificate, while RetailMeNot offers coupons for many chain restaurants such as Chili's, Applebee's, and Red Lobster. While these can provide amazing deals, make sure to read the fine print closely, as some certificates or coupons require a minimum spending amount or are only valid at certain times. Finally, Groupon offers great deals both attraction and food-wise in Orlando, giving you the chance to explore our city without draining your wallet.

Meetup opportunities during the Summit

Speaking of eating during the Summit, the Florida Chapter is hosting two get-togethers in honor of STC's 65th Anniversary. These will be geared towards allowing attendees to meet, socialize, and network with other attendees while they enjoy some amazing Orlando cuisine (including at several restaurants discussed in this article). The first is a Pub Crawl, which will take place on Monday night, May 21. The second is a Diner Meetup, which will take place on Tuesday night, May 22. If you would like to learn more about these events, please visit The Florida Chapter's Facebook page (*@stcorlando*).

No matter where you choose to eat, have a good time and a good meal, and enjoy your time in Orlando and at the Summit. We'll see you soon!

There are many opportunities to dine with the local chapter.

While You're In Florida

BY TISA NEWCOMBE | *STC Student Member* and **KAREN LANE** | *STC Fellow*

CENTRAL FLORIDA is known for attractions (Disney, Universal Studios, Legoland, Busch Gardens, Old Town, Holy Land Experience, and SeaWorld, to name a few)—check out *VisitOrlando.com* for tickets and ideas—but it has so much more you'll want to explore, so plan to spend a few days here before or after the Summit and really get to know us.

Orlando and Nearby

Along International Drive, you can find many odd and interesting destinations, which you can read about in other articles in this series or ask at the host chapter hospitality desk in the conference center.

A short taxi (or Lyft or Uber) ride away are many unique areas to explore: museums, homes, places to stroll, and cafés to enjoy.

The **Orlando Museum of Art** (*https://omart.org/*) offers several collections including African art, American art, art of the ancient Americans, and contemporary art. During the Summit, OMoA will be featuring an exhibit of Seminole art.

Mennello Museum of American Art (*https://www.mennellomuseum.org/*) boasts a large-scale sculpture garden, a permanent collection of art from Earl Cunningham, and rotating exhibitions.

If your favorite museums contain not art but science and technology, be sure to visit the **Orlando Science Center** (*https://www.osc.org/*). On May 18th and 19th, the center will host an event called Star-Studded Evenings. These evenings consist of a feature-length film in the Digital Adventure Theater and an opportunity (weather permitting) to stargaze in the Crosby Observatory for $10 per person.

Thirty minutes north of the Summit hotel, **Winter Park** (*https://cityofwinterpark.org/visitors/arts-culture/*) is a charming community featuring parks, shops, cafés, and a world-class museum devoted to the works of Louis Comfort Tiffany. The **Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art** (*http://www.morsemuseum.org/*) is open Tuesday through Sunday and has been described as "the most important collection of Tiffany material in the world today."

A short walk from the Morse Museum on the beautiful campus of Rollins College, you can explore the collection and exhibits of the **Cornell Fine Arts Museum** (*http://www.rollins.edu/cornell-fine-arts-museum/*), the only European Old Masters collection in the Orlando area, also holding a sizable American art collection and the Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art.

If you're looking for entertainment or dinner theater, Orlando has all that, too. Novelty dinner theater opportunities such as the **Sleuth's Mystery Dinner Show** (*https://www.sleuths.com/*) and **Medieval Times** (*http://www.medievaltimes.com/plan-your-trip/orlando-fl/index.html*) can make your evening feel like an adventure.

Further Afield

If you have a free day and a car (or can rent one), don't miss the **Kennedy Space Center** (*https://www.kennedyspacecenter.com/*) on the east coast. Only an hour's drive from the Summit hotel, KSC is a space fanatic's delight, featuring tours, exhibits, and IMAX films. Here you can see an actual Space Shuttle and many exhibits about the early space program, the quest to reach the moon, and NASA's ongoing projects.

While you're in the KSC area, explore some of the beautiful beaches nearby. And if you're a bird watcher, you cannot do better than spending a few hours at the **Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge** (*https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island/*).

In the other direction, an hour-and-a-half drive west brings you to Tampa-St. Petersburg, a thriving metropolitan area with cultural resources and beautiful beaches. Notably, you can find a top-notch museum devoted to the works of **Salvador Dalí** (*http://thedali.org/*). Open seven days a week, the

City of Winter Park Communications Department

Winter Park street scene

museum is a treasure on Florida's west central coast, offering free tours with paid admission.

After visiting the museum, you can stroll and shop in **Ybor City** (in downtown Tampa), known as "Florida's Latin Quarter," a historic cigar-making district with a strong Cuban influence and wonderful restaurants.

If you are a beer drinker, **Cigar City Brewing** (*https://cigarcitybrewing.com*) in Tampa should be on your must-go list. Tours are held Wednesday through Sunday and include generous tastings; reservations are recommended.

Morse Museum

Off the Beaten Path

Milk District (*https://www.orlandomainstreets.com/districts/the-milk-district/*)—A historic district in the heart of downtown Orlando with a weekly food truck rally, historic architecture, and trendy nightclubs and restaurants (30 minutes northeast).

Wekiwa Springs State Park (*https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/Wekiwa-Springs*)—A great way to cool off from the heat. Enjoy canoeing and kayaking down the Wekiva River (40 minutes north).

Daytona Beach—A bit better known, this is a great beach location in Central Florida on the Atlantic Ocean. The historic Daytona boardwalk runs down the main section of Daytona Beach, offering traditional boardwalk fare (80 minutes northeast).

Kennedy Space Center Heroes and Legends Theater

Announcing the 2018 Summit Opening Keynote Speaker

STC IS PROUD to announce the opening keynote speaker for the 2018 Technical Communication Summit & Expo: Carla Johnson! Carla is a speaker, author, storyteller, and Chief Experience Officer for Type A Communications. Her keynote address, "Perpetual Innovation," will talk about how the world's most innovative teams create great ideas to deliver exponential outcomes. Don't miss her during the Summit Opening General Session on Monday, 21 May. Here is a description of her presentation.

We've all seen the examples of LEGO's Hollywood movie, GE Ecomagination and Dos Equis' "Most Interesting Man in the World." They're held up time and again as beacons of killer creative. Enough already. It's easy if you have sexy products, big budgets and household brand names. But we create technical articles, user guides and complex documentation. Those innovative examples don't have anything to do with us. Or do they? It turns out, we all suffer from something called Brand Detachment Disorder (B.D.D.). We can't connect the dots with brands unrelated to ours, and our blindness kills creative ideas before we even start. But guess what—the most brilliant minds understand creativity is something you consistently nurture, rather than leave to chance. Welcome to Perpetual Innovation.

In this captivating presentation, author and marketing executive Carla Johnson shows you how combating B.D.D., recognizing inspiration everywhere, and iterating ideas breeds unstoppable creativity and game-changing innovation for you and your company. You'll walk away ready to jump-start collaboration to deliver exponential outcomes for your brand.

Join Carla Johnson and fellow attendees in Orlando to cultivate idea-driven teams that breed unstoppable creativity and game-changing innovation. To learn more about Carla and her exciting keynote presentation, visit *summit.stc.org*.

David Armbruster: A Remembrance

BY GEORGE HAYHOE | *STC Fellow*

DAVID NEVER met a stranger—perhaps a cliché, but nonetheless true. He introduced himself to me at a reception at an STC East Tennessee Chapter conference in 1986. He had moved from Oak Ridge, TN, two years earlier to head the scientific publications unit at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) in Memphis. The room was full of friends from his days there, where he had served as manager of the publications competition and two terms as chapter president. Instead of chatting with his friends, he sought me out, because I suppose he could tell that I knew no one in the room. As I look back on our long friendship, that act was the essence of David's character and humanity.

He had a way of making people feel comfortable in uncomfortable settings, befriended in a room full of strangers. Over the years, I observed him repeating this kindness many times, especially at breakfast at STC Summits. He sought out first-timers, made them feel welcome, asked them about sessions they had attended, and delighted in sharing a joke.

In 1986, he was appointed STC's assistant to the president for recognition programs, where he oversaw the competitions, Fellows programs, and other awards. In 1989, he was elected second vice president of STC. From 1989 to 1993, he served as Second and First Vice President, President, and Immediate Past President, and then spent more than 20 years as an active member of the Senior Advisory Council, the group of past presidents who share their wisdom with the current holder of the office.

Within the Society, David's contributions were recognized over the years by election to the ranks of Associate Fellow in 1994 and Fellow in 1998. He also received the President's Award in 2001. Outside of STC, in his "day job," he taught technical writing and presentation skills to students and staff at UTHSC, and worked as an author's editor, helping students and faculty with journal manuscripts and grant proposals. He was promoted to full professor in 2003, and also served as assistant and then associate dean for academic affairs at UTHSC. When he retired in 2013, he continued his editorial work and also helped

disadvantaged first-graders improve their reading skills.

Although he has been absent from STC for more than a decade, I can think of no one who better embodied the Society's mission: "[advancing] technical communication as the discipline of transforming complex information into usable content ...."

Most of us associate this statement with making complex information usable for non-expert audiences, but David's focus was expert-to-expert communication. I spent many hours talking with him about his work as a scientific editor and marveled at how immersed he was in the subject matter about which his authors wrote. Much of it I would be challenged even to pronounce, but David was always fascinated by the different challenge of helping physicians and scientists communicate effectively with an audience of their peers. Whether getting journal manuscripts published or grant proposals funded, I'm certain that David was partly responsible for the professional success of scores of authors with whom he worked over the years.

David died on 28 December 2017, three days before what would have been his 71st birthday. He is mourned by his two brothers and their families, many friends, and those whose work his editing elucidated.

There's more content online!

Read the online-only article "A Chicken in Every Pot: The Freelance Technical Writer and a Style Manual for Every Client" by Myra Cook Brown and the unabridged version of "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? Wait! We Can" by Michele Linn and Andrea L. Ames on *Intercom* online. You can also find another great article about preparing for the 65th annual Summit in Orlando: "Summit Preparation Tips" by STC member Nicholas Ducharme.

Matters That Matter

Jacob Lund/Shutterstock

BY MICHELLE CORBIN | *STC Fellow*

ANYONE WHO KNOWS me knows that I am very passionate about technical editing. While I started out my career as a technical writer, I quickly discovered that I enjoyed the editing and revising tasks much more than the writing and creating tasks. When Andrea asked me to write a column for *Intercom* on editing, I jumped at the opportunity.

Let me explain a bit about the title of my first article. My column is called Editing Matters. The word *matter* is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, a matter is a topic. As a verb, to matter means to have importance. Matter has many, many definitions, and is used in many, many idioms, and to this word nerd, Editing Matters, was a perfect fit. (Of course, in technical communication, we must be more precise in our terminology, and a word being both a noun and a verb means that we should shy away from using such a word, but I'll save that tangent for another article.)

I plan to cover the matters of editing from many views: technical communication, journalism, rhetoric, linguistics, and information architecture, to name a few. I do feel like editing, or technical editing, pulls from all of these disciplines. Technical editing is more than just wrangling the grammar, style, and punctuation of a language. As much as I love words, technical editing is about more than just the words.

I am sure that I will venture into theoretical matters, but I promise to try to bring it back to the practical matters. I try to keep up on the research in the editing space, but I'm pretty far away from my academic pursuits. I do have quite a list of resources that I will draw on and around which I built a technical editing workshop. I will most certainly draw on my years (and years) of experience as a technical communicator, development editor, terminologist, information architect, and Web editor.

I know that I will have to discuss the matter of who you are editing for—for yourself, for a SME (either a non-writer or a SME who fancies themselves to be a writer), or for technical writers. When editing your own writing, we will discuss the matter of how editing weaves its way throughout the information lifecycle. We will explore the ideas of "ownership" and "accuracy" and the role that technical writers or technical editors play, especially when editing the writing of SMEs. Teams of technical writers are sometimes lucky enough to have a dedicated technical editor; however, sometimes those teams implement a peer reviewing system where several people take on the matter of technical editing. The matter of how you edit depends greatly on whose writing you are editing.

Why does editing matter? To answer this question, I will summarize the premise of a *Technical Communication* article that I researched and wrote to justify my existence as a technical editor. In a nutshell, the premise is that most products are not released until after some amount of testing is done, so most technical communication should not be released until after some amount of editing is done. Technical editing comprises many types of editing (comprehensive editing, usability editing, and copy editing, just to name a few), just like the different types of testing. Technical editing is a quality assurance process. Editing matters because quality matters.

In Editing Matters, Michelle Corbin covers matters (topics) about editing that matter (are of consequence) to communicators of all kinds. Watch this space to understand more about editing and what you can do to improve the quality of your content. To suggest a topic or ask a question, contact Michelle at *michelle.l.corbin@gmail.com*.

REFERENCE

Corbin, Michelle, Pat Moell, and Mike Boyd. "Technical Editing as Quality Assurance: Adding Value to Content." *Technical Communication* 49.3 (August 2002): 286–300.

I Know Someone
Who Can Help with That

Syda Productions/Shutterstock

BY ALAN J. PORTER | *STC Senior Member*

IT'S HAPPENING, WHETHER we want it to or not, technical communication and marketing communication are overlapping. Add in the rapidly evolving field of customer experience, and we are fast approaching a convergence of content. Content is the foundation on which customer experience is built, be it text, imagery, video, or audio. From "snackable content" to chatbot conversations, it will all need to be structured, tagged, and written for reuse across multiple deliverables. And who better to provide that sort of skill and knowledge than the professionals in the technical communication industry?

Traditionally technical and marketing communication teams are managed in separate parts of an organization and have little visibility into, or influence on, what the other is doing. But the drive to deliver seamless, frictionless customer experiences is changing that situation. More and more companies are taking a holistic view of who their customers are, and why, when, and where they are interacting with the company, as well as taking note of what they do during those interactions.

I've spent the past five years in both product and content marketing roles, and it quickly became clear to me in those positions that marketing could learn a lot from the technical communicators. I also realized that the converse is true, that technical communicators can learn a lot from marketing practices. And both will benefit from taking an outside-in, customer-centric approach to the content they deliver.

After all, marketing is content, and all content is marketing.

I'm now in a new role that has me with a foot firmly in both camps, and it's an exciting position to be in. That's what this column is going to be about: the convergence of technical communication, marketing communication, and customer experience—for I believe that this is where our future lies, and where we can provide the most value. I'm looking forward to the conversation.

The theme of this issue of *Intercom* is around having a healthy content organization, but that is often more than one organization within an enterprise. Content is pervasive across any enterprise, and every organization within it is its own content organization—by that I mean that every part of an enterprise produces content.

If you think about it, no matter the size of a company, from a one-person consulting shop to a global mega-corporation employing hundreds of thousands of people, they all do the same five things.

1. They create something to fulfill a need—a product or a service.
2. They tell people about it.
3. They get people to buy it (hopefully).
4. They collect money for it.
5. They create content along the way.

That content can be to let people know the company and product exists (marketing), to persuade them to buy it (sales), to direct the exchange of money (finance, invoicing, etc.), to help people use it (technical communication), and to build ongoing relationships with customers (customer experience). Allied with all of that external content is all of the internal policies and procedures that make a business run. It's all content.

As a result, there are experts on different sorts of content spread all across an organization, and to get the best value out of your content, you need to build relationships that allow that expertise to be shared.

As pre-sales content and post-sales content begin to overlap, Alan Porter provides the latest insights about our role in that evolution in Convergence Conversations. Learn through this column to build bridges and form synergies with your counterparts in marketing. Contact Alan at *ajp@4jsgroup.com* to ask a question or propose a topic for him to cover in this column.

I believe that technical communicators are in the best position to drive those relationships.

Here are a few examples of outreach I've used over the years that have built great collaborative relationships:

- Struggling with how to express or format a technical calculation? Reach out to the woman in finance or pricing who is a whiz at Excel spreadsheets and manipulating numbers.
- Can't come up with a help topic title that will be quickly findable? Reach out to the search engine optimization guy in marketing who knows what keywords your organization is paying for. He's already done the research on what your customers look for.
- Can't figure out how some pieces of equipment fit together? Reach out to your colleague in manufacturing who actually builds them.

Then reverse the process by offering your services and expertise.

- Become the person who offers to do a little bit of wordsmithing assistance for your new friend in finance.
- Offer to supply some subject matter expertise to the marketing manager struggling with a blog post.
- Help out the woman in finance with the best way to develop a graphic for her next presentation.

Build you own personal healthy content organization, and you will start to get visibility and input into what is happening elsewhere. You might even be invited to participate in other teams' projects where they need content expertise and practical insights.

I've often said that I believe that the technical publications team (or whatever other title it may go by) is the place in an organization where all the intellectual property comes together. No other group has the visibility into design, engineering, manufacturing, as well as customer usage and support.

I also believe that it should become the central network hub for those who need assistance with content. We should be the people who come to mind when someone else in the organization with a content problem says, "I know someone who can help with that."

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Organization Events Across the Globe

FYI lists information about nonprofit ventures only. Please send information to *intercom@stc.org.*

1 15–19 Feb
The **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)** annual meeting will be held 15–19 February 2018, at the Austin Convention Center in Austin, TX.
AAAS
http://meetings.aaas.org/
meetings@aaas.org

2 25–27 Mar
The annual **Spectrum STC Rochester Conference** will be held 25–27 March 2018, at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY. This year's theme is "Hack Into Your Flow."
STC Rochester
http://stc-rochester.org/spectrum/
spectrum@stc-rochester.org

3 5–10 Apr
The **International Society for Performance Improvement** will be holding its annual conference 5–10 April 2018, at the Grand Hyatt Seattle in Seattle, WA.
ISPI
https://www.ispi.org/ISPI/Conference/

4 6–7 Apr
The annual **Conduit STC-Philadelphia Metro Chapter Mid-Atlantic TechComm Conference** will be held 6–7 April 2018, at the Giant Conference Center in Willow Grove, PA.
STC-Philadelphia Metro Chapter
http://www.stcpmc.org/conferences/conduit-2018/
conference@stcpmc.org

5 19–22 Apr
The 32nd annual **Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) Conference** will be held 19–22 April 2018 at the Millennium Hotel, Minneapolis, MN.
AIIP
https://www.aiip.org/conference

6 26–28 Apr
The **American Society for Indexing (ASI)** annual conference will be held 26–28 April 2018 in Cleveland, OH.
ASI
https://www.asindexing.org/conference-2018/

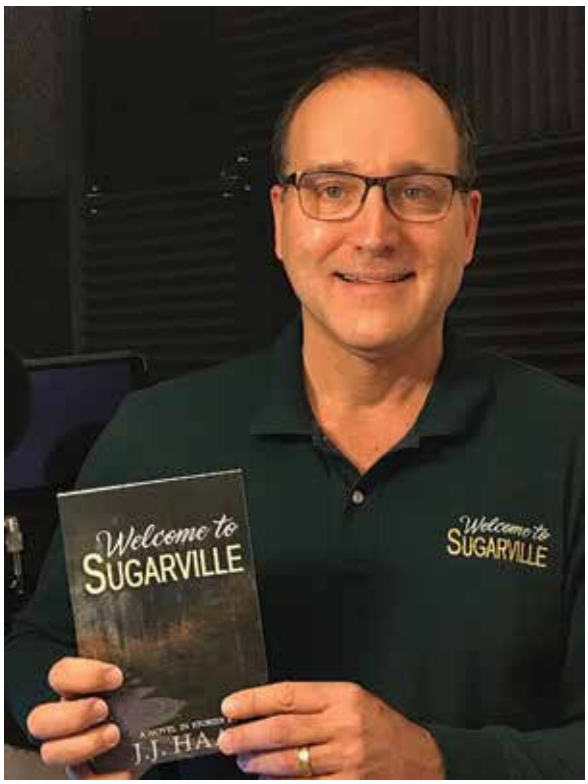
7 20–23 May
The **65th Annual Technical Communication Summit & Expo** will take place 20–23 May 2018, at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando, FL, with a theme of "Communicate the Future."
STC Summit
https://summit.stc.org/
summit@stc.org

* STC-related event

Technical Writing Versus Creative Writing

BY J. J. HAAS | *STC Fellow*

I'VE BEEN A TECHNICAL WRITER and a creative writer most of my life, and I've spent a good deal of time thinking about my Jekyll-and-Hyde existence. Kurt Vonnegut once wrote, "Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writings," and that's certainly a distinction. But I think it's worth taking the time to discuss the similarities and differences between these two prose styles in more depth to gain a better understanding of them both.



J. J. Haas, author of Welcome to Sugarville: A Novel in Stories

Technical writing is considered nonfiction, a subgenre of prose that emphasizes fact. Technical writers typically employ an explicit or implicit second-person point of view ("you") to help the reader accomplish a discrete task by following a procedure consisting of a series of steps. Technical writing is not considered creative writing, but that's not to say that technical writers cannot be creative on the job.

Most creative writing falls into the category of fiction, a subgenre of prose that emphasizes the imagination. Creative writers typically employ an explicit third-person point of view ("he") or first-person point of view ("I") to help the reader engage with the story, empathize with its characters, and attain an emotional catharsis by the end. Creative writing is not considered technical writing, but that's not to say that creative writers don't research their subject matter in great detail to attain verisimilitude in their narratives.

The primary difference between the two prose styles is that technical writing is *intellectual* (Dr. Jekyll) and creative writing is *emotional* (Mr. Hyde). As Vonnegut suggested, the technical writer never reveals himself to the reader, but I would argue that the personality of the technical writer is immaterial because an emotional connection is unnecessary for the reader to complete his task. In other words, emotion has nothing to do with this intellectual exchange.

On the other hand, the creative writer *must* reveal himself to the reader to engage him in the emotional rollercoaster of an experiential story. The reader has to see the creative writer as an honest broker for the narrative, as if the creative writer must show his hand before the reader will put his own cards down on the table. The best way for a reader to become emotionally engaged in a narrative is for the creative writer to reveal himself so that the two of them can attain what I call "a soul-to-soul connection." Narratives can have an intellectual component, and mine certainly do, but the reader ultimately reads fiction for emotional catharsis.

So there is a profound difference in the fundamental purpose of the two prose styles. Both are meant to help the reader—either to complete a task or to attain catharsis—but because one purpose is intellectual and the other emotional, the methods by which the two types of writers achieve their goals can vary widely. I try to keep these differences in mind as I write in these two distinct genres, but I also feel that they have complemented each other over time. My technical writing experience has helped me put the reader first and research more vigorously when I write creatively, and my creative writing experience has helped me tell a story and employ a conversational tone when I write technically. I'm happy to be a technical writer *and* a creative writer, and I feel that practicing both disciplines has helped me to become a better *writer* overall.

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